

## **Fact Sheet - Recreational Collection Of Minerals & Gold In The Tellico Ranger District**

**2011**

*Recreational mineral collecting is a recognized use of National Forest System land. Interest in this activity has grown over the past several years. Certain requirements and restrictions are in place to protect you and the environment.*

### **All mineral collecting is subject to the following requirements and restrictions**

- **Recreational mineral collecting is not allowed in wilderness areas or wilderness study areas in the Tellico Ranger District.** This includes; Bald River Gorge Wilderness, Citico Creek Wilderness, Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Wilderness, Upper Bald River Wilderness Study Area, and the Joyce Kilmer/Slickrock Addition Wilderness Study Area.
- Streamside vegetation must not be damaged or removed.
- Stream banks must be left undisturbed.
- **Disturbance from gold collecting including digging, excavating, or dredging may only occur in the stream bed below the water line and must not undercut or destabilize stream banks.**
- Reject material from gold collecting (sands, gravels, cobbles) must be reshaped and smoothed to appear natural. It should be used to fill any excavated holes in the stream. It must not be left in piles in the stream bed or along the stream bank. It must not be placed to redirect stream currents.
- Temporary dams for non-mechanized sluices must be dismantled daily.
- Collection and camping areas should be left clear of all litter and refuse. Pack it in; pack it out!
- Mercury may not be used on National Forest System lands to recover or process gold.
- Collection or removal of historical and pre-historical objects or artifacts, such as arrowheads or pottery shards, is prohibited.

### **Additional requirements for the use of mechanized or motorized equipment**

You must register annually and in person at the Tellico Ranger District office and have proof of registration if you will be using any type of mechanized (with moving parts) or motorized equipment, such as dredges, pumps including hand pumps, and some types of sluice boxes. Registration is not transferable and expires at the end of the calendar year in which it is issued. You must have proof of registration available for inspection when operating mechanized or motorized equipment for mineral collecting on National Forest System lands in the Tellico Ranger District. All adults (18 years old or older) must have individual proof of registration. Registration is not required for the use of non-mechanized (no moving parts) equipment, such as hand tools, gold pans, classifiers or sieves, and some sluice boxes.

### **Use of mechanized or motorized equipment is allowed on National Forest System lands in the following areas only:**

- Tellico River - the river and its tributaries from the junction of Turkey Creek and the Tellico River downstream to the National Forest Boundary. This does not include any portion of Turkey Creek
- Coker Creek – between Unicoi Lakes Road and Joe Brown Highway (locally known as Doc Rogers Fields) from May 1 to November 1.

### **Use of mechanized or motorized equipment is additionally subject to the following requirements and restrictions:**

- Hydraulic mining operations of any type, such as highbanking, which washes material from the stream bank into the water is prohibited.

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These requirements apply only to National Forest System lands. There are private lands within the boundaries of the District. **Please respect private property!**

It is your responsibility to know where you are relative to private lands, wilderness or wilderness study areas, and areas where use of mechanized equipment is allowed.

Your use of an area is not exclusive and you may find other individuals collecting gold and other water-based recreational activities such as kayaking and fishing occurring in the same locations.

*For additional information contact the Tellico Ranger District Office at 423-253-8400 or 250 Ranger Station Road, Tellico Plains, TN 37385. Business hours are 8 am to 4:30 pm Monday through Friday.*

- The use of winches to move boulders or large woody debris is prohibited.
- The use of highbankers to process materials on the stream bank or floodplain is prohibited.
- The dredge/vacuum/pump engine may not exceed 10 H.P. (2 to 4 cycle).
- Dredge/vacuum opening may not exceed 3 inches.
- All engines must be equipped with a muffler and spark arrestor.
- Motorized equipment must be removed from the stream to be refueled and/or serviced. Equipment must be moved at least 50 feet from the stream or to an established parking area.
- No petroleum products or chemicals shall enter the stream at any time.
- Extra fuel must be stored at a parked vehicle when not in use.
- Operating dredges must be at least 200 feet apart as measured along the stream.
- All equipment must be removed from the stream overnight.
- Dredging shall not be conducted within 50 feet of a bridge support or culverted road crossing where the culvert is 48 inches or larger in diameter.
- Dredging shall not be conducted within 20 feet of Forest Service Trail 117, the Unicoi Mountain Trail.
- Dredging shall not interfere with any existing habitat improvement structures, stream channel improvements, gauging stations or stream diversions.
- Dredge anchorage systems shall not restrict water-based recreation; free, unobstructed access across the stream channel and downstream must be maintained at all times.

